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ABSTRACT

This essay argues for a theory that accounts for the nature and function of women's discourse through combining structure and subject. It maintains that whenever women are theorized about by scholars, those scholars are co-contributors in constituting ontologies for women's existence, and that it is therefore necessary to constitute perspectives that see women as speaking subjects in a heterogeneous process, for certain contemporary feminist theories and models that describe and explain women's discourse have failed to account for women as speaking subjects. Part one of the essay summarizes and critiques the muted group model (women seen as victims); part two summarizes and critiques the work of Jacques Lacan. Part three attempts to piece together the work of Luce Irigaray. The essay argues that although these three frameworks have been insightful, they distort, disavow, and deny women's communication. In a final section, the essay utilizes the works of Julia Kristeva, detailing a cogent discovery of women as speaking subjects in the semiotic process. Twenty-seven references are attached. (Author/SR)

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ABSTRACT

Toward Womanspeak: Explication and Critique of Spender, Lacan, Irigaray and Kristeva's Perspectives on Women Speaking

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Whenever we theorize about women, we are co-contributors in consitituting ontologies for women's existence. Therefore it is necessary to constitute perpectives that see women as speaking subjects in a heterogenaeous process. Certain contemporary feminist theories and models that describe and explain women's discourse have failed to account for women as speaking subjects. This essay exemplifies a movement toward articulating women as speaking subjects. Part one of the essay summarizes and critiques the muted group model. Part two of the essay summarizes and then critiques the work of Jacques Lacan. Part three of the essay attempts to piece together the work of Luce Irigaray. Although each of these three frameworks have been insightful, we argue that they distort, disavow and deny women's communication. In a final section of the essay, the works of Julia Kristeva are utilized. She details a cogent discovery of women as speaking subjects in the semiotic process. The essay argues for a theory that accounts for the nature and function of women's discourse through combining structure and subject.

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Toward Womanspeak: Explication and Critique of Spender, Lacan, Irigaray and Kristeva's Perspectives on Women Speaking[1]

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RUNNING HEAD: TOWARD WOMANSPEAK

Paper presented at the 39th Annual Conference of the International Communication Association Convention, May 25-29, 1989, San Francisco, California.

As feminist theorists, we[2] must ask ourselves an important question, namely, what ontologies are we typifying for women through our theorizing? For as much as we attempt to abstract and explicate existent ontological categories, at the same time we also necessarily constitute new ways of being for women. Since part of the task of theorizing is to give us a particular way of seeing objects and processes, we must take care to understand what kind of woman we are seeing when we set out to abstract and synchronize categories of existence.

Certain contemporary feminist theories and models that describe and explain women's discourse have failed to account for women as speaking subjects, that is, "as subject of a heterogeneous process" (Kristeva, 1986, p. 30). In other words, there is a need to account for women's experiences of speaking in a dynamic and mixtured fashion. Certain theories and models fall short in their attempts to explain or describe women's discourse, resorting to an essentialist view or to a perspective that constitutes women as victims of in inescapable oppressive language. This essay exemplifies a movement toward explaining and describing women as speaking subjects.

Part one of the essay summarizes and critiques the muted group model. This model finds its place within an information theory that asserts a fixed, unbreakable linguistic code that purports women as victims. Part two of the essay summarizes and then critiques the work of Jacques Lacan as it has been utilized in feminist theorizing. Lacan's work purports women as spoken subjects, that is, subjects who speak a language that is not their own; subjects tyrannized by Lacan's

signifying metaphor, the phallus. Part three of the essay attempts to piece together the work of Luce Irigaray, who purports a communication theory in her search for "woman" as speaking subjects, but in her move toward an essentialist view, fails to account for the symbolic order in which the speaking subject is always already embedded.

Although each of these three frameworks have been insightful, we argue that they distort, disavow and deny women's communication. Each perspective constitutes ontological positions that damn women to ineffability. To find a way out of this theoretical dilemma, the works of Julia Kristeva are utilized. Kristeva's work transcends the digital logic of information theory as well as the analogue logic of communication theory and merges the two. She details a cogent discovery of woman as a speaking subject in the semiotic process that accounts for "both the nature (description) and function (explanation) of language use in human behavior exchange" (Cherry, 1957, p. 305). We embark on this task through a description of the fundamental characteristics of each perspective and their respective uses in feminist theory, followed by a critique of each perspective.

The Muted Group Model

Spender (1980) and Kramerae (1981) develop Ardener's (1975) muted group model to explain how women are spoken subjects. They argue that women live in a male defined society and that discourse functions as a way of controlling women. Their work is grounded in the discoveries of Shirley and Edwin Ardener. Edwin Ardener (1975), an anthropologist, concluded from his research that language was created by males and that the epistemology created through langauge was

validated through reference to male experiences. Ardener describes the model using the terms dominant and muted. Men are labelled the dominant group because men formulate and encode discourse. Women are labelled the muted group because of their exclusion from the formulation and validation of discourse. Spender (1980) explains that "women are muted because men are in control and the language, and the meanings, and the knowledge of women cannot be accounted for outside of that male control" (p. 77).

Explication of the Muted Group Model

Spender (1980) and Kramerae's (1981) elaboration of the muted group model operates under two assumptions. First, language creates reality. This theory, first introduced by Sapir (1970) and Whorf (in Carrol, 1976), contends that reality is unconsciously created through the language habits of a group. Second, women and men perceive the world differently based on the division of labor (Kramerae, 1981) and "women and men generate different meanings, that is, there is more than one perceptual order" (Spender, 1980, p. 77). The second assumption is rooted in part in traditional Marxist social theory, which will be brought into question later in this essay.

The basic tenets of the muted group model follow. First, women and men perceive the world differently based on the division of labor. The division of labor in the muted group model places men in public realms and women in private realms. Public discursive practices have been reified as positive and productive in a post-industrial world bent on progress and domination. Private discursive practices have remained private, even silenced. Spitzack and Carter (1987) recognize that

public and political criteria guide what is included as cultural history. Since women's discourse is traditionally a private phenomenon, women are left out of history. Spitzack and Carter call this type of discourse "womanless communication." Male exemplars are utilized to explain and report the strategies and styles of a society, thus resulting in a distorted picture of homogeneity.

Second, men's perceptions of the world are normative, institutionalized, and correct. Women's perceptions of the world are not allowed to surface in discourse. Male encoded discourse denies existence of certain experiences in society. Kramerae (1981) explains:

> The language of a particular culture does not serve all its speakers equally, for not all speakers contribute in an equal fashion to its formulation. The words and the norms for [women's] use have been formulated by the dominant group, men. (p. 1)

Men assume that their experiences are universal; and that women share similar "male" perceptions and experiences. As a result, the experiences and perceptions of women are not addressed or reflected in discourse. This process of encoding universal male meanings into the language structure assures that women's experiences will be denied or invalidated.

Third, in order to express themselves, women must adopt the male system of expression. "Women who wish to express themselves must translate their experience into the male code" (Spender, 1980, p. 81). This presents to women a double bind because it denies, discounts, and defines women and women's experiences (Kramerae, 1981). The problem for women, in utilizing a discourse dominated by men, is that words are

not "fitted to women's experience" (Kramerae, p. 1). Women are unable to articulate in the dominant tongue because the language available for use does not provide signs or meanings that adequately reflect or represent women's experience. "Women are a 'muted group' in that some of their perceptions cannot be stated, or at least not expressed, in the idiom of the dominant structure" (p. 2). Spender (1980) writes that women are "confined to the words of the dominant group [and are forced to express themselves] in an alien language" (p. 83).

There is some evidence to support the muted group model. For example, occupational terms generally refer to males (Kramerae & Treichler, 1985). "Hard" data is objective/good and "soft" data is subjective and unsubstantiated (Roberts, 1981). Masculine pronouns are generally considered to refer to both women and men (Spender, 1980). The dominant deity in the western world is conceptualized as male. In addition, men assume legal rights to name their spouses after themselves while women must be granted naming rights by the courts (Kramerae & Treichler, 1985). Daly (1973) writes that "we have not been free to use our own power to name ourselves, the world, or God" (p. 8).

According to the muted group model, women exist in a culture dominated by inadequate descriptors. In her essay on naming the experience of anger, Scheman (1980) says that women have many experiences of anger in their lives, but without names for those experiences, women do not know exactly what it is that they are experiencing. Men block women's experience of anger by not acknowledging that anger. Women, within patriarchal discourse, can't

be angry. Feminists, for example, are discounted because they are "angry women."

The muted group model presents a framework for examining the ways in which discourse reflects the perceptions and experiences of a dominant group. The values of a dominant group are encoded into the language structure and through habituation reified and purported to be universal. Men create the world, according to the muted group model, and reify that world in discourse. "Naming is a power used to tame and domesticate women and nature; naming separates men from nature and women, separates the social and public from the domestic and natural" (Kramerae, 1981, p. 26). In addition, men control the form in which language is used "which has shaped the language system available for use by both sexes and has influenced the judgments made about the speech of men and women" (p. 26).

Critique of the Muted Group Model

The muted group model is problematic because it fails to acknowledge the empirical fact that women do in fact speak, and in public. A brief perusal of popular and academic culture attests to this. The muted group model does not recognize women's speaking experiences except to say that any attempt by women to speak is blocked or belittled.

Cameron (1985) asserts that the muted group model is "remote from the lived experience of women" and that such theories "reject the validity of that experience [and] in order to explain these things, we have to resort to notions of alienation, male control, [and] negative semantic space." (p. 134). In summary, the muted group model is

grounded in a linguistic determinism which asserts that language reflects the needs and ideas of the dominant culture. This classical mode of thinking, which we would name "vulgar Marxism," is problematic because women can and do "generate independent ways of representing their reality linguistically" (Cameron, 1985, p. 104). At best, the muted group model offers an explanation of women's exclusion in traditional public discourse which is, in this case, time and context bound. The muted group model assumes that women are "directly and exclusively anchored in the State or, more generally, in the social machine and social relations, that is, relations between men governed by need and suffering" (Kristeva, 1984, p. 138) emphasis added. The muted group model moves through a post-industrial (modern) world view that places women in a victimized slot. It emphasizes a closed, homogenous, information theoretic in which the subject is unable to articulate her experience in her world. Further, the account of nature and function in the muted group model stretch Ardener's findings with an analogical generalization that does not address itself to the heterogeneity inherent in a larger social context.

The muted group model limits itself to analyzing women's experience via modes of production. "Such analyses focus on the relationship between the producer and the text, implying that consumers are passive and unaware of the ways in which messages act upon them" (Grossberg, 1984, p. 394). Such an analysis of women's absence from discursive practices alienates women and discounts their ability to decenter and decode dominant discourse. The muted group model "embodies a 'way of seeing' only insofar as its appropriation is

already defined by the moment of production or encoding" (Grossberg, p. 397).

The muted group model may actually be repressive in nature. Moi (1985) writes: "once 'women' are constituted as always and unchangingly subordinate and 'men' as unqualifiedly powerful, the language structures of these groups are perceived as rigid and unchanging" (p. 154). Further, "the fact that feminists have managed to fight back, have already made people feel uncomfortable in using the generic 'he' or 'man,' have questioned the use of words like 'chairman' and 'spokesman'...surely proves the point: there is no inherent sexist essence in the English language, since it shows itself appropriable, through struggle, for feminist purposes" (p. 158). Giddens (1979) writes that such analysis as the muted group model imply "a derogation of the lay actor" (p. 71). He continues:

> If actors are regarded as cultural dopes or mere 'bearers of the mode of production', with no worthwhile understanding of their surroundings or the circumstances of their action, the way is immediately laid open for the supposition that their own views can be disregarded in any practical programmes that might be inaugurated. (Giddens, 1979, p. 71)

Another perspective gaining popularity in communication studies is the psychoanalytic approach as developed by Jacques Lacan.

The Psychoanalytic Perspective of Jacques Lacan

Lacan's position is similar to the muted group model, that is, both hold a deterministic, information theoretic view of discourse. Kramerae (1981) reduces Lacan's position to the assertion that "one

doesn't control language but is rather a victim of it" (p. 66). In Lacan's words:

> It is the world of words which creates the world of things -the things originally confused in the hic et nunc of the all-in-the-process-of-becoming- by giving its concrete being to their essence, and its ubiquity to what has been from everlasting...man speaks, but it is because the symbol has made him man. (Lacan, 1968, p. 39) emphasis added.

Explication of Lacan's Contribution to Feminist Theory

Lacan's psychoanalytic project, influenced by cultural anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss (Muller & Richardson, 1982), attempts to turn toward linguistic rather than neurological or biological determinism as a framework for understanding human behavior. He writes: "I may be permitted to laugh if these remarks are accused of turning the meaning of Freud's work away from the biological basis he would have wished for it towards the cultural references with which it is shot through" (Lacan, 1977, p. 106). Lacan's linguistic determinism assumes that self-appropriation is tangential to language; expression is subject to a pre-existent social order that forces constraints upon its members.

Lacan asserts that a collective unconscious exists within which are located the laws of a culture and the meanings that define that culture. His formula states "the unconscious is shaped like a language" (Descombes, 1980, p. 94). Based on this semiological and structuralist perspective, Lacan calls the collective laws and meanings of a culture the symbolic order. The symbolic order can be accessed, according to Lacan, only through language. Lacan's project is

concerned with the ways humans adapt and create a place within the symbolic order. "The psychoanalytic experience has rediscovered in man the imperative of the Word as the law that has formed him in his image....it is in the gift of speech that all the reality has come to man and it is by his continued act that he maintains it" (Lacan, 1977, p. 106).

For Lacan, "meaning emerges as the result of the play of differences within a closed system" (Silverman, 1983, p. 163) emphasis added. Within Lacan's self-enclosed discourse, the subject is constituted through its relation and assimilation into the culture. Lacan concentrates his analysis not on the subject, but on the signifier. The subject for Lacan submits to the law of the signifier, thus impeding any possibilities for self-appropriation. "It is in the name of the father that we must recognize the support of the symbolic function which, from the dawn of history, has identified his person with the figure of the law" (Lacan, 1977, p. 67). Meaning does not reside in the lived life of the subject, but in the language (langue). Lacan asserts that humans must undergo a process of transformation in order to assimilate into a culture. This transforation to the symbolic is done through language and other systems of signification (Dayan, 1976).

"Lacan's most important claim," according to Cameron (1985), "is that male and female children enter the symbolic order differently: their relations to language differ" (p. 119). Children enter the symbolic order through their relation to Lacan's signifying metaphor, the phallus. The phallus has two contradictory meanings in Lacan's

work.

> On the one hand, the phallus is a signifier for those things which have been partitioned off from the subject during the various stages of its constitution, and which will never be restored to it.... On the other hand, the phallus is a signifier for the cultural privileges and positive values which define male subjectivity within patriarchal society, but from which the female subject remains isolated. (Silverman, 1983, p. 183)

This essay is concerned with the latter meaning which posits the phallus as central to identification with the symbolic order. The isolated female subject, estranged through lack of possession of the phallus, "remains unrepresented within patriarchal culture" (Silverman, 1983, p. 186). Lacan (1977) writes: "in order to be the phallus, that is to say, the signifier of the desire of the Other...a woman will reject an essential part of her femininity, namely, all her attributes in the masquerade" (p. 290).

In order to identify with the symbolic order, women must submit to the Law of the symbolic order. Lacan asserts that language is phallic, that is, language is controlled by a phallocratic, pre-determined social order. "Events are engendered in a primary historization," writes Lacan (1977), "in other words, history is already producing itself on the stage where it will be played out, once it has been written down, both within the subject and outside him" (p. 52). The phallus creates and defines the symbolic order which includes "signifying processes, social, cultural and linguistic" (Cameron, 1985, p. 124). Women have no power in the social order since they do not possess the phallus. "The phallus is the privileged signifier of that

mark in which the role of the logos is joined with the advent of desire" (Lacan, p. 287). Thus the language of a culture is linked to the phallus which is the object of desire. The phallus designates and sets finite limits upon possibilities for meaning and conditions any variance in language through its presence as a signifier (p. 287).

In order for women to function [appropriately] in a phallocratic society, women must admit that they do not possess the phallus; women must admit that they are lacking in something which men have, namely, power in the symbolic order (via the phallus). According to a Lacanian reading, women's perception and expression are subject to the signifying metaphor: the phallus. Although both sexes are subject to the phallus, female sexuality is censored, while male sexuality is repressed. The censored sexuality of women is manifested in "two alternative cultural projections by means of which man can always be assured of having the phallus -in the first instance through appropriation, and in the second through an oppositional definition" (Silverman, 1983, p. 188). The first cultural manifestation signifies woman as plenitude, that is, woman as nature, akin to Lacan's "the real." Her direct relation to the real precludes women from ever acquiring symbolic power. The second cultural manifestation signifies woman as lack, i.e. lack of the phallus. To be a woman, according to Lacan, is to be described as "an absence, as a lack, as a subordinate negativity to maleness, rather than as a difference" (Kramerae, 1981, p. 68). The way women are defined in the symbolic order force them either to retreat to silence (muteness) or to assume the male defined

feminine style (mimicry) assigned to women within patriarchal discourse. As Irigaray (1985), in a discussion about Lacan, writes:

> ...in order to be the phallus, that is to say, the signifier of the desire of the Other, that a woman will reject an essential part of her femininity, namely, all her attributes in the masquerade. It is for that which she is not - that is, the phallus- that she asks to be desired and simultaneously to be loved. But she finds the signifier of her own desire in the body of the one -who is supposed to have it- to whom she addresses her demand for love. (p. 62).

For a woman, lack suffers a double consequence in that first, women are estranged from drives thus initially constituting desire in all humans, and second, women are marginalized within the symbolic order to a static position of non-representation. Women are "taught to value only those objects which are culturally designated" (Silverman, 1983, p. 178). Women's desires are orchestrated by men. Thus "women are constructed in the domain of the male sign, and therefore they are, as Lacan puts it, 'excluded from the nature of things, which is the nature of words'" (Irigaray, 1985, p. 125). Lacan (1977) asserts that "desire makes itself recognized for a moment, only to become lost in a will that is the will of the other" (p. 105).

Critique of Lacanian Psychoanalysis

While no speaking subject exists within Lacan's rubric, women are placed beyond the scope of signification. According to Irigaray (1985), "the 'feminine' is always described in terms of deficiency or atrophy, as the other side of the sex that alone holds a monopoly on value: the male sex" (p. 69). Women are defined, in and through their relationship to the phallus.

Silverman (1983) writes: "It is preposterous to assume either that woman remains outside of signification, or that her sexuality is any less culturally organized or repressed than her male counterpart" (p. 189).

Irigaray's (1985) work is an attempt to "go back through the masculine imaginary, to interpret the way it has reduced us to silence, to muteness or mimicry, and I am attempting, from that starting point and at the same time, to (re)discover a possible space for feminine imaginary" (p. 164). The imaginary Irigaray's work exposes "is the term used by Lacan to designate that order of the subjects experience which is dominated by identification and duality" (Silverman, 1983, p. 157). Irigaray (1985) rejects Lacan's linguistic determinism, arguing instead that men happen to be the dominant class at present. Rather than using linguistic devices to control women and maintain male dominance, men simply silence women. As a point of departure, Irigaray critiques psychoanalytic theory through an analysis of its discourse. Irigaray's (1985) Marxist criticism of psychoanalytic discourse helps illuminate the marginal role of women in Freud and Lacan's work. Traditional psychoanalysis assumes that women exist only in relation to men and are not different from men, only <u>lacking</u> in certain male attributes. Irigaray criticizes Freud initially, stating "all Freud's statements describing feminine sexuality overlook the fact that the female sex might possibly have its own 'specificity'" (1985, p. 69). Irigaray submits, furthermore, that "Freud himself is enmeshed in a structure and an ideology of the patriarchal type" (p. 70). At best, traditional psychoanalytic discourse is as time and context bound as

the muted group model. Its theories are situated in a patriarchal order that prefers male signification over female signification. Its closed structural attributes, focusing on the signifiers' slippage through an airtight submarine of meaning, reject the possibility for a speaking subject within the leakproof portholes. This information theoretic again constitutes the speaking subject as victim.

Spender and Lacan as Information Theoretic

Both the muted group model and the Lacanian perspective define communication as a linear process of "information" dissemination. Both assume a predictable female response to a homogenous, closed coding system. The distinguishing mark of the muted group model and Psychoanalytic theory is their insistence on the inability to alter the male dominated coding system. In both cases, women's ability to create meaning is unaccounted for. Neither theory accounts for variable semiotic codes. Neither theory reflects, represents, or attempts to articulate a women's discourse which possesses empirical material existence in the lived-world. Both perspectives exhibit a bad ambiguity that moves toward a regulation of conscious experience (Lanigan, 1988).

Irigaray's Proposition

Irigaray (1985) reinterprets psychoanalytic theory in a way that accounts for the uniqueness of women. Through writing Speculum of the Other Woman, which when published in 1974 consequently caused her expulsion from the Lacanian school of Psychoanalysis, Irigaray "came to think that the discourse carried on by psycho-analysis about female sexuality was mistaken" (Irigaray, 1977, p. 62). Psychoanalytic

thought was an imposition of a structure and an ideology that repressed women's desire. Her work concluded that female sexuality could not articulate itself within a traditional [Aristotelian] system of logic. When asked in an interview how she would describe a feminine discourse, Irigaray responded:

> First of all I would say it has nothing to do with the syntax which we have used for centuries, namely, that constructed according to the following organization: subject, predicate, or; subject, verb, object. For female sexuality is not unifiable, it cannot be subsumed under the concept of subject. Which brings into question all the syntactical norms.... (1977, p. 64).

Explication of Irigaray's Developments

Irigaray offers two important developments to psychoanalytic theory, both of which posit a linguistic site for women as signifying beings. First, she offers a conceptualization of a world in which a woman-centered coding system is not suppressed. Irigaray asserts that for women there always exist at least two meanings in messages. This plurality of meaning is evident at the level of speech (parole). This "two-lipped" message, characteristic of a feminine language, conveys polysemic utterances, yet women are adept at decoding the intended meaning in order to conduct a conversation (Irigaray, 1977). Tannen (1986) restates Irigaray's conceptualization in her discussion of metamessages, which serve to comment on the relational aspects of messages.

Second, Irigaray (1985) writes that, rather than allowing the phallocratic order to encode universal meanings for both men and women, that we instead "return the masculine to its own language, leaving open

the possibility of a different language. That means that the masculine would no longer be 'everything'" (1985, p. 80). Male semiotic structure and meaning should reflect and represent male experience. Irigaray claims that women are not gaining emancipation by working toward equal status with men because women are still operating within a male ideology; women are still marginal to the phallus. Thus, "it is essential for women among themselves to invent new modes of organization, new forms of struggle, new challenges" (Irigaray, 1985, p. 166) that are not male defined.

Irigaray's position is an attempt to posit an open system in which men and women are mutually and exclusively capable of generating language. Her outline relies on the possibility of variation in semantic codes. This movement breaks down the dichotomous subject/object split inherent in traditional empirical research. Irigaray splits the traditional knower (the male) from the traditional known (woman) in order to allow a woman's discourse to emerge.

Critique of Irigaray's Proposition

While she does this, she further argues for two diverse, closed systems of signification, one male and the other female. While breaking down one dichotomy, she simultaneously sets up another. Moi (1988) argues that "articulated in isolation, the emphasis on female difference comes disturbingly to echo the very patriarchal prejudices against which the champions of women's equality are struggling" (p. 6). If we focus on her female system of signification, we discover still more problems. What Irigaray fails to do is account for the symbolic order from which a feminine imaginary may manifest itself. Her

propositions, although therapeutic in their movement toward the emancipation of the feminine, are speculative. What is necessary, if we are to account for woman as speaking subject, is a perspective that simultaneously combines accounts of the nature and function of women's communication. What is needed is a theory that accounts for the subject generating language within a generated symbolic order. In brief, we are searching for a perspective that accounts for the signifying practices of women within the social order that is directive toward the possibilities for women centered language generation. "The promotion and valorization of Otherness will never liberate the oppressed" (Moi, 1988, p. 12). Irigaray's work is deterministic in this way and as a result we must continue our search.

Kristevan semanalysis, which emphasizes the speaking subject as an object for linguistic analysis, is one movement which assists this task.

Kristevan Semanalysis

Moi (1985) explicates Kristeva's movement away from the deterministic and authoritarian stance taken by modern linguists. "Language then, for [Kristeva], is a complex signifying process rather than a monolithic system" (p. 152). Kristeva views language as a heterogenous process, rather than a homogeneous one. Her perspective further asserts that articulating masculinity and femininity as binary opposites is a movement toward "arbitrary closure on the differential field of meaning" (p. 154). Kristeva (1984) asserts that "this heterogeneity...cannot be reduced to computer theory's well-known distinction between 'analog' and 'digital'....in making this

transposition, one quickly forgets not only that language is simultaneously 'analog' and 'digital' but that it is, above all, a doubly articulated system" (p. 66).

Explication of Kristevan Semanalysis

Language, for Kristeva, includes elements of both nature and function which are manifest symbolically and semiotically. In opposition to Irigaray, Kristeva asserts that humans access speech through the symbolic order. The symbolic order articulates syntax as well as a horizon of possibilities for signification. Indeed, "there is no other space from which we can speak: if we are able to speak at all, it will have to be within the framework of symbolic language" (Moi, 1985, p. 170). The speaking subject is a subject who "means," according to Kristeva (1984). This phenomenological subject "is opened up to all the possible categories" (1984, p. 23), thus allowing the speaking subject access to semantics and pragmatics. Kristeva names this realm the symbolic. At the same time, theories of the unconscious assist Kristeva in naming the semiotic. The semiotic articulates "the dimensions (instinctual drives) and operations (displacement, condensation, vocalic and intonational differentiation)" (p. 22). Eagleton (1983) explicates the semiotic, writing "the semiotic is fluid and plural, a kind of pleasurable creative excess over precise meaning, and it takes sadistic delight in destroying or negating such signs" (p. 188). The semiotic functions to break down the dichotomies "by which societies such as ours survive" (p. 189).

"These two modalities [the symbolic and the semiotic] are inseparable within the semiotic process that constitutes language" (p.

24). The semiotic assists in the generation of the symbolic and vice versa. The semiotic and the symbolic exist simultaneously and all discourse is marked by their twofold presence. "Because the subject is always both semiotic and symbolic, no signifying system he produces can be either 'exclusively' semiotic or 'exclusively' symbolic, and is instead necessarily marked by an indebtedness to both" (p. 24). Indeed, "it is important to see that the semiotic is not an alternative to the symbolic order...it is rather a process within our conventional sign-systems" (Eagleton, 1983, p. 190). Kristeva's work is a combination of the aforementioned theoretical perspectives. Kristeva's perspective infers that Lacan's "symbolic" does not hold primacy over Irigaray's "semiotic." Giddens (1979) parallels this assertion, writing that "structure thus is not to be conceptualized as a barrier to action, but as essentially involved in its production" (p. 70).

Kristeva (1984) uses the term "signifiance" to assert a process in which speaking subjects generate language. Signifiance is the process of transforming natural and social resistances into the symbolic code. This heterogeneous practice structures and destructures the subject and society. This generation occurs within the three levels described by Lanigan (1988) as the syntactic, the semantic, and the pragmatic. Thus Kristeva (1984) asserts that speaking subjects generate the form, meaning, and use of language. The symbolic is seen not as oppressive, but as necessary to the signifying process.

In addition to these developments, Kristeva accounts for a part of women's reality not previously discussed in this essay, namely, the body. Kristeva (1984) asserts that pulsions of the semiotic emerge

from a body and are "arranged according to the various constraints imposed on this body -by family and social structures" (p. 25). These charges and pulsions, which are manifest as aspects of the semiotic, emerge from what Kristeva calls "the semiotic chora." The chora is a motile space from which emerge the desires of a body-subject. Kristeva's conceptualization of this "space" from which women's speech emerges is an attempt to account for the moment in which desire may be recognized and the structure of language subverted. For Kristeva, subjects speak from and through the pulsions within the body.

Within this framework exist possibilities for a variety of positionalities with regard to the symbolic and the semiotic. The strength of Kristeva's framework is its combinatorial nature and function. Women's discourse emerges from, and is generated through, a heterogenous signifying process. This framework accounts for women's ability to both subvert and/or challenge existing structures. In addition, it allows space for self-appropriation within the existing symbolic order. Indeed, Kristeva's theory even allows for revolution in the existing order. Kristeva (1980) writes "Countervailing the sign system is done by having the subject undergo an unsettling, questionable process; this indirectly challenges the social framework with which he had previously identified, and it thus coincides with times of abrupt changes, renewal, or revolution in society" (p. 18). As stated, Kristeva's theory accounts for possibilities and positionalities in language. Within the both/and framework of the symbolic and the semiotic, women can now be perceived as articulating a discourse with distinct features. We can also perceive the possibility

for transforming the symbolic. Both of these statements move closer to articulating women's experience qua women's experience. Langellier and Peterson's (1987) efforts, among others[3], move toward articulating a women's logic and a women's reality and are clarifying exemplars of what Kristeva alludes to in her work. What Kristeva's theory offers us is a "context of choice...that can explain communicative behavior that is socially variable within a culture (langue) and culturally variable in society (parole)" (Lanigan, 1988, p. 186).

Conclusion

This research explicates four attempts to account for women's languaging experiences in the social world. We have been critical of perspectives which deny women's experience and/or assert that women's experience is ineffable. The political force of this project has been a movement toward constituting an ontology for woman as speaking subject who can challenge dominant discourses and/or articulate a discourse which is as heterogenous to the dominant discourse as it is generative in nature.

It is necessary to critique perspectives such as the muted group model and psychoanalytic theory in a post-modern world where the subject's positionality is assumed to be active and heterogenous due to the shift of emphasis from production (or syntax) to consumption (or semantics and pragmatics). Irigaray's work, as therapy, is a useful method of opening space for the heterogeneity in a discursive formation, yet, as stated, it is limited.

Kristeva offers us a way of seeing women as actors within structures. Giddens' (1979) theory of "structuration" assists in

articulating Kristeva's intentions. He writes that "the concept of structuration involves that of the duality of structure, which relates to the fundamentally recursive character of social life, and expresses the mutual dependence of structure and agency" (p. 69). In our search for a way of articulating the nature and function of women's discourse and the speaking subject from whence that discourse emerges, we have found Kristeva' work an exemplary assist.

The fundamental purpose of this paper has been to search for woman as speaking subjects. We have also been sensitive to the ontologies these theories constitute for women. Underlying that purpose has been a need to utilize theory to exemplify women's discourse "as it is" without denigrating that discourse and to constitute an ontological framework that is free from the strife of victimization. It is important also to understand that each of the perspectives constitutes a way for women to see themselves. As much as we want to explain women's oppression, we must be sensitive to and moving toward constituting subject positions that enable women to see their own possibilities for creating structures that enable rather than constrain.

We assume that there does exist a nature and function of women's discourse. Kristeva simultaneously gives us a speaking subject always already embedded in a culture. Her work also accounts for the possibilities for both self-appropriation and change. It is important for women to understand the grounds from which their oppression might emerge; it is equally important to understand that women can speak.

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Notes

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2. Throughout this essay I use the term "we" rather than "I" or "one." The "we" refers to the persons referenced in this essay who, teamed up under my organization, are attempting to address the dilemma of women speaking.

3. I turn to research on women's personal narratives for justification of this point. For example, see J. Bromberg, 1982, "Storying and changing: An ethnography of speaking in consciousness raising," Unpublished doctoral dissertation, U. Pennsylvania, D. Hall and K. Langellier, "Storytelling strategies in mother-daughter communication," in A.Taylor & B. Bate (Eds.)(pp. 107-126), Women Communicating (Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing, 1988). For a good review, see K. Langellier & E. Peterson, 1984, "Spinstorying: An analysis of women's storytelling, Paper presented at SCA, Chicago, IL, December.

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